

## REFLECTIONS ON USING HEMI-SYNC® IN PSYCHOTHERAPY

*by Sylvia B. Perera, M.A.*

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I used the 201B Hemi-Sync Synthesizer in sessions with five patients during a month-long "research" period to try to estimate what effects the use of Hemi-Sync might have. I prepared the clients differently for the use of a mechanical adjunct to the usual therapy, and I noted individual results.

In all cases, however, there was a marked change in my feeling relaxed, alert, and centered, which must have had an impact on the therapeutic field. There was also increased client ability to perceive and to verbalize what I am now calling "derivative messages of balance." I have italicized some of these below. These derivative messages of balance were particularly noteworthy in two borderline clients. The tendency to split perceptions and emotions into mutually exclusive either-or states is part of the borderline diagnostic picture. But the same effect occurred with a manic-depressive female client and a male with severe compulsive and intellectualizing defenses.

One borderline woman with a history of self-mutilation and psychotic ideation came into the session in panic, feeling paranoid that a "man had been watching" her on the train. I was playing surf with Beta, Delta, Theta at a level just below traffic noise, so it was not really audible. She had been previously informed that I at some point would try surf and other sounds in the room. She gave no indication that she heard the tape. I had been silent except for a brief question to elicit the objective facts about her experience on the train. She began to relax after twenty minutes of whimpering like a fearful infant that alternated with hypervigilant arousal and urges to hurt herself again. She then said, "I can begin to relax into my body. I can begin to feel safe . . . Oh, I can see *something double*. Feeling safe and being watched and hated can be *together*. That's weird. That never happened before." In a later session with the same Hemi-Sync setting she talked about "feeling real in a space we share—not alone in terror. You are there—here, too. I can be with you together."

A manic-depressive, hysteroid woman in the first session during which I used Hemi-Sync remembered a dream of “standing between two men, so I am not afraid.” She then spoke more coherently than usual, with less manic anxiety. She eventually, in the same session, provided a derivative message of balance quite explicitly by talking about “balances [she could feel] between light and dark parts of [her] body, above and below.” At another session she reported that she could get “an overview [of her sense] of shame.”

With the intellectualizing male client I tried the Delta, Theta setting to attempt to outflank his normal conceptualizing persona. We both nearly went to sleep. I switched to add Beta, and the profound inertial pull continued. During six sessions of this state, we were mutually able to experience and acknowledge the power of nearly autistic defenses under his previous glib, left-brain talk. Exploring these deeper defenses led into memories of the abuses that had walled off his vivid emotional life in early childhood. About three months later I tried the Beta, Delta, Theta setting and he responded immediately by talking about “balancing conceptual and emotional sides” of himself.

To a severely phobic client, I urged the use of the *Deep 10 Relaxation* tape I lent him. After using it a few times with what he reported were positive results, he lost the tape. This provided analytic material to begin to analyze the grip—and secondary gains—of the phobic responses. Another client refused to use a tape at home, feeling I was shoving her off with a surrogate caretaker, as her mother had done by leaving her with maids. But she has responded well to the synthesizer in sessions. Hemi-Sync seems to help her to process her dependency cravings more realistically. I used Beta, Delta, Theta with her, but sometimes started the session with Theta, Delta when she was manic, and switched to Theta, Beta when she is what she calls “awash and murky.”

These are anecdotal data. It is impossible for me to do anything more hardline experimental with living clients in an intentionally therapeutic field—even though therapy by its very nature is somewhat experimental and improvisational. For example, I cannot tell how much of the effects were due to the Hemi-Sync sounds on the clients or, as I indicated, how much they helped me to stay centered and objective as a research observer and thus affected the mutual field. In either case, I do think there was a benefit. And with the particular borderline woman I mentioned, I attribute her slow but radical shift to that month of sustained use of the synthesizer. I chose to use it after three years of work with her. Why that moment felt “right” and why and when I choose to use Hemi-Sync with which clients is something about which I am still musing. It may be that there is a need to explore fully the nonbalanced states until I have an intuition that a synthesizing stage is appropriate.

Since that month of research, I have been using the synthesizer quite intuitively. It is very hard to know what exactly is going on in such a complex, multidimensional field as psychotherapy, especially as the observer here is part of the field.

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